The exploration blocks includes 10 onland, 26 shallow water offshore and 12 deep water offshore blocks.

The last date for submission of bids is 18th may, 1999.

(c) The New Exploration Licensing Policy which envisages increased competition among companies is a step towards increasing oil exploration.

In addition ONGC and OIL have a programme for the IXth Five year Plan which will bring about significant changes in physical inputs and approach.

Gas Linkage to PIPAVAV Power Project

1032. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Saurashtra Region of Gujarat, which is a backward region, is suffering from acute power shortage;

(b) whether is it also a fact that Government have made a commitment to allocate the gas to Pipavav Gas based Power Project to overcome the power shortage to this region;

(c) if so, the reasons for diverting the entire gas from Tapti fields to HBJ pipeline ignoring the claims for the Pipavav Gas based Power Project;

(d) whether the Central Government is considering to allocate gas for the project from other sources; and

(e) If so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) The supply and distribution of power to various regions in a State is the sole responsibility of the concerned State Government and the State Electricity Board. As against the Peak demand of 6629 MW during the period April 98-January, 99, the supply was 5623 MW, resulting in a shortage of 15.2%.

(b) to (e) It was decided in 1989 to allocate gas from the yet to be developed Mid & South Tapti Fields to a power project to be put up at Pipavav and take the gas from Gandhar Fields to the HBJ pipeline system. However, subsequently keeping in view the fact that the investment decisions to develop Mid & South Tapti fields were yet to be taken, it was agreed to allocate the Gandhar Gas for two gas based power projects of 600 MW each in Gandhar area and to take the gas from Mid & South Tapti Fields to meet the existing commitments along the HBJ pipeline system. The Government of Gujarat have been advised accordingly.

New LPG Agencies in Assam

1033. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of new LPG agencies allotted in the State of Assam during 1997-98;

(b) what is the target fixed for allotment of new agencies in this State during 1998-99; and

(c) the details of norms and guidelines laid down by Government for such allotment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) and (b) In addition to the locations pending from previous Marketing Plans 69 locations have been included in the marketing plan 1996—98 for setting up LPG distributorships in Assam. It generally takes 6—12 months for commissioning of the distributorship from the date of interview.

(c) As per existing policy for allotment of dealerships/distrubutorships, locations included in the approved marketing plans are advertised by the Oil Companies inviting applications from persons meeting the eligibility criteria relating to nationality, age, educational

qualifications, residence, income, multiple dealership norms etc. Selection of eligible candidates is made by the Dealer Selection Boards on merit. Reservation for different social objective categories is provided as under:—

Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ ST)	—25%
Physicaly Handicapped Persons (PH)	—5%
Paramilitary/Police/Government Personnel (PMP)	—8%
Defence Personnel (DC)	—8%
Freedom fighters (FF)	—2%
Outstanding Sprotspersons (OSP)	—2%
Open (O)	—50%

Also, 33% of the dealerships/ distributorships in all the categories mentioned above are reserved for Women belonging to that category. Other things being equal, Unmarried women above 40 years of age without earning parents and Widows are given priority over others.

Oil Companies Investment in Gail

1034. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether IOC and ONGC propose to invest in GAIL equity; and

(b) if so, the strategy behind the move?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) Yes Sir, through purchase of a part of Government held equity in GAIL.

(b) The alliance between IOC, ONGC and GAIL through equity participation in each other can provide synergic advantage to these companies, enhance their competitiveness and give them greater levaraging capacity.

Utilisation of Regional Research Laboratory at Jorhat

1035. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) how do ONGC (ERBC) and OIL (Duliajan) utilise Regional Research Laboratory at Jorhat for their industrial research work; and

(b) wheather it is fact that ONGC (ERBC) and OIL (Duliajan) prefer R.R.L. at Dehradun to R.R.L. at Jorhat; if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) ONGC and OIL are utilising consultancy services from RRL at Jorhat for their various industrial project research work like Bio-remediation of crude oil sludge, soil investigation, geotechnical investigation for effluent treatment plant, impact of gas flaring on paddy, tea etc., development of polymer drilling additives, development of timber substitutes, geo-microbiological property, development of flow improvers for high wax crude etc. The analytical facilities are also utilised for different analytical requirements.

(b) There is no RRL at Dehradun. However, depending upon the nature of requirements, projects for which necessary infrastructure is not available with RRL, Jorhat, are referred to Indian Institute of Petroleum, Dehradun for study.

Royalty for crude

1036. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been a long pending demand from the Government of Gujarat for revision of royalty for crude;

(b) what action has been taken on that; and